

The Tobacco Institute's Fire Safety Education Program

Accidental fires attributed to careless cigarette smoking have long been a concern of the tobacco industry. The Tobacco Institute's Fire Safety Education Program is one aspect of the industry's response to that concern. The program is currently the chief source of private sector funding for fire prevention education in the United States..

The primary objective of The Institute's Fire Safety Education Program is to assist the fire service and others involved in public safety education in reducing the number and severity of accidental fires. The program is based on international studies by Philip S. Schaenman of TriData Corporation, which determined that public education was largely responsible for the low incidence of fire deaths in European, Far Eastern and Pacific countries.

Fire departments, fire service organizations and public educators committed to fire prevention education in more than 300 communities throughout the United States have used Institute grants to purchase audio-visual equipment, production services, educational materials and other needed resources. Although continuing to award grant money in special circumstances, the program now centers around distributing fire safety education materials developed by the fire service and funded through the program.

Among the Institute-sponsored materials available through the program are "FireCare," a fire safety program for senior citizens developed with the fire service of Nassau County, New

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York, and the State of Pennsylvania; "FireSense," a fire safety program for the deaf and hearing impaired developed with the cooperation of the fire service and deaf community in California; "Fire Safety Education Evaluation Survey," a questionnaire developed with the Foundation for Fire Safety that tests fire safety knowledge in adults, young adults and schoolchildren; and "New Tools for Volunteer Fire Fighters," a public relations package developed for the National Volunteer Fire Council to assist with recruitment, fundraising and fire prevention.

From the program's inception, TI staff and consultants have met with fire department officials and fire service organizations on the national, state and local levels to answer questions about the Fire Safety Education Program and explain the industry's position on the accidental fire issue. In the latter connection, many have been surprised to learn that the tobacco industry has cooperated fully in federal government efforts toward making cigarettes "fire-safe."

Many also are unaware that The Institute seeks no publicity for its Fire Safety Education Program outside the fire service. Because of its emphasis on assisting the fire service with "no strings attached," The Tobacco Institute has earned its reputation as an aboveboard, honest, responsible ally with a long-term commitment to fire prevention education.

The Tobacco Institute maintains that a comprehensive program of public fire safety education is the most effective way to prevent accidental fires.

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